

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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1. A method for serving applications over a computer network from an application server system to a target computer, the method comprising:
    - the target computer signaling the server system with a request for an application;
    - the server system responding to the request by transferring an application descriptor to the target computer;
    - the application descriptor being read by a helper application executing on the target computer; and
    - the helper application controlling the target computer to execute the application, which resides on the server system.
  2. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising the target computer signaling the server system with the request for the application by user selection of a link, which is displayed by a browser and associated with the application.
  3. A method as described in Claim 2, further comprising the application link containing an application identifier that identifies the requested application to the server system.
  4. A method as described in Claim 2, further comprising the link pointing the browser to the server system.
  5. A method as described in Claim 2, wherein activating the application link triggers the downloading of the application descriptor from the

server system to the target computer.

6. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising the server system encrypting the application descriptor prior to transmission to the target computer.
- 5 7. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising invoking the helper application in response to the receipt of the application descriptor on the target computer.
8. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising maintaining the helper application on a graphical user interface of the target computer.
- 10 9. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising maintaining the helper application on a graphical user interface of the target computer to display advertisements.
- 15 10. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising issuing a command to a browser to display a follow-up page in response to termination of the application on the target computer.
11. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising including, in the application descriptor, minimum system requirements information, which is used by the target computer to ensure that adequate system resources are available to run the application.
- 20 12. A method as described in Claim 11, wherein the application descriptor contains transaction mode information.

13. A method as described in Claim 11, wherein the application descriptor contains application server information indicating a host computer to which the target computer is to attach to receive the application.
14. A method as described in Claim 11, wherein the application descriptor contains advertisement information indicating a host computer to which the target computer is to attach to receive advertisements.
15. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising tracking by the server system a status of the operation of the application on the target computer.
16. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising a failure server of the application server system receiving error log information from the helper application in response to improper operation of the application on the target computer.
17. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising the application descriptor containing application server information indicating a host computer of application server system to which the target computer is to attach to receive the application, the host computer being selected to load-balance across the application server system.
18. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising the target computer mounting the server system to access the application.
19. A method as described in Claim 1, further comprising the target computer accessing the server system via port 80.

20. An application serving system operating across a computer network, the system comprising:
- a target computer that requests an application;
  - a server system that responds to the request by
  - transferring an application descriptor to the target computer;
  - a helper process executing on the target computer that reads the application descriptor and controls the target computer to execute the application, which resides on the application server system.
21. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the target computer is activated to signal the server system with the request for the application by user selection of a link, which is displayed by a browser and associated with the application.
22. A system as described in Claim 21, wherein the application link contains an application identifier that identifies the requested application to the server system.
23. A system as described in Claim 21, wherein the link points the browser to the server system.
24. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein activating the application link triggers the downloading of the application descriptor from the server system to the target computer.
25. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the server system encrypts the application descriptor prior to transmission to the target computer.

26. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the helper process is invoked in response to the receipt of the application descriptor on the target computer.
27. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the helper process is maintained on a graphical user interface of the target computer.
28. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the helper application is maintained on a graphical user interface of the target computer to display advertisements.
29. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein a command is issued to a browser to display a follow-up page in response to termination of the application on the target computer.
30. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the application descriptor contains minimum system requirements information, which is used by the target computer to ensure that adequate system resources are available to run the application.
31. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the application descriptor contains transaction mode information.
32. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the application descriptor contains application server information indicating a host computer to which the target computer is to attach to receive the application.
33. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the application descriptor

-36-

contains advertisement information indicating a host computer to which the target computer is to attach to receive advertisements.

34. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the server system tracks a status of the operation of the application on the target computer.

5 35. A system as described in Claim 20, further comprising a failure server of the application server system to receives error log information from the helper application in response to improper operation of the application on the target computer.

10 36. A system as described in Claim 20, wherein the application descriptor contains application server information indicating a host computer of application server system to which the target computer is to attach to receive the application, the host computer being selected to load balance across the application server system.

15 37. A system as described in Claim 20, further comprising the target computer mounting the server system to access the application.

38. A system as described in Claim 20, further comprising the target computer accessing the server system via port 80.

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